Quaker Religious Thought

Early Friends and the Work of Christ

Arthur O. Roberts

COMMENTS

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Religious Experience and Religious Thought

An Editorial

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Religious Experience and Religious Thought --

AN EDITORIAL

This is the fifth issue of *Quaker Religious Thought,* a venture in publication which started as a venture of faith. Members of the Quaker Theological Discussion Group believed that many Friends and their friends would be interested in exploring the intellectual foundations of Quakerism, and although there was no assurance of sufficient financial support the venture was begun. The results abundantly justify the faith, for the demand for copies of each issue has been very gratifying and works of enduring value have been written. Furthermore, this magazine has had the virtue of being a means of expression for the various branches of Friends in this country since a conscious effort is made to bring to bear varieties of viewpoint upon each problem. British Friends also have added greatly to this endeavor. It has seemed appropriate as this publication got underway to center its first studies upon historical themes, and such themes will continue to occupy much of our attention. In this editorial, however, I wish to depart from this particular emphasis in order to examine a theme of considerable contemporary interest among us, namely: What is the relation between religious experience and religious thought (or theology)?

This question is of particular interest to Friends just because we make a point of emphasizing the *experiential* nature of our religious practices. All Friends are acquainted with George Fox's statement of his conversion experience. He wrote in his *Journal* that after a period spent in utter misery he at last heard a voice which said, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition." He ends his account of this life-determining experience with the statement, "And this I knew experimentally." All Friends, in the liberal Quaker tradition at least (and it is to these in particular that this editorial is directed), know also that this emphasis upon the "experimental" nature of our Quakerism has been one of our identifying marks over three centuries. In our preoccupation with experience we often like to point out that our religion is not a "notional" one, that theological beliefs and creeds are secondary to experience for us, and that we believe our lives should be God-centered and not

creed-centered. That is, many of us stress the special emphases found in Quakerism to the extent of denying or of treating as unimportant the more formal aspects of historic Christianity, both creedal and institutional.

Quakerism did begin in an emphasis upon experience and continued with another teaching given by George Fox which held that true Christianity consists in being a member of the Christian community within which the inward Christ is heard and obeyed as head of that community. This thought continues the emphasis upon experience for, as Maurice Creasey pointed out in his article, early Friends thought of Christ under three aspects but they emphasized the third of these. The three were: first, Christ in his pre-historical aspect; second, as he appeared in history in Palestine; and, third and most important, as he is now to be known within spiritual experience. The questions Friends asked of professing Christians were not whether they accepted certain creeds or followed certain ecclesiastical practices but, rather, "Have *you* heard God's voice?", "Does Christ speak among *you*?", "Have *you* the same Spirit that the prophets and Christ had?" Thus, early Quakerism may best be classified as experiential or spiritual Christianity.

It is true also that because of this emphasis upon immediate, present experience a certain depreciation of formal theological belief appeared. This is probably best explained by saying not that Friends rejected religious understandings but, rather, that these were assumed to be valid yet felt to be secondary to the inward and the personal. Whatever the reason may be, both the creedal and the historical aspects of religion became inevitably less significant among Friends than they continued to be in other Christian groups.

Movement in this negative direction has reached a peak in some of our contemporary Friends' meetings in which religious thought is regarded with a vague yet strong suspicion. Theology, which is the systematized form of religious thought, is at times dismissed out of hand as though obviously not only unimportant but positively dangerous to the spiritual life. Some persons feel that thought and the formal aspects of religion are cold and unspiritual substitutes for the warm, authoritative immediacy of religious experience itself. Spiritual doddards may need such props as substitutes for experience but we do not! Possibly not many Friends would speak as strongly as this, yet the atmosphere of such ideas clings to many of our discussions. It may at times be questioned whether those Friends who feel so strong an opposition to religious thought have considered carefully just what it is they are opposing. It cannot be that they believe one should not think about God, Christ, the nature of man, or salvation. It may

be that they are opposing, quite validly, two misuses or misunderstandings of theology but in doing so throw out the baby with the bathwater. Sometimes, theological thought is taken in such a way as to seem to deny any importance to spiritual religion today because of a seemingly exclusive emphasis upon what happened ages ago, especially in the life of Jesus. When this extreme emphasis appears it must be opposed in the name of vital religion. A second cause of misunderstanding may be that some Friends identify all religious thought with a *particular* creed or *particular* theological system. What is forgotten or overlooked is the fact that there can be theological thought that is unified, yet not expressed in terms of a dogmatic system, but rather as that which catches up the truths learned by our forebears and interprets the experiences of the present. We believe that there can be no significant religious experience without thought.

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN RELATION TO RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

It must be stated clearly that if and when theology becomes an end in itself—when true religion is identified with a system of theological beliefs—then religion has truly lost its life. Much as the scientific formulation of laws in biology is not life itself but an abstraction from life, so too theological formulation is an abstraction from religious experience and is not religion itself. It attempts to express in the best thought of the day the intellectual *understanding* of the nature and significance of religious living. There *is* value and even necessity for doing this, just as long as one keeps clearly in mind the fact that these *are* formulations pointing to mystery beyond the mind of man and are not themselves religion. A menu is an abstraction of a meal, quite inedible and unnourishing, yet menus do have some value. So too it is not theology, important as that is, but, Christians would say, discipleship and obedience that make religion. To illustrate the point once again, the description of gravitational attraction is a very different matter from a falling object, and the description of a rose is not at all the same thing as the concrete, beautiful flower itself. The distinction between the experiential and the abstraction, between religion and its formulations, should not be lost.

True as it is that theology may not replace the Spirit, it is equally true that religious experience cannot do without religious thought. This point is not so evident as the former, hence it requires more careful discussion. Frederick Tritton, the British Friend, has remarked that every kind of experience is more than simply the observation of events and facts. Our experience, he maintains, is what we *do* with what happens; it is the *meaning* of the events. To understand this point, let us re-

turn to the illustration of a rose. The basic experiences of the senses with a rose are those of a certain form, color, and odor. These are the raw material, so to speak, of our experience, but they are only its starting point. What we actually *do* with the raw material of this experience is to relate it by thought and word to others of our former experiences. This rose, we think, is more delicate and pleasing in shape and form than some other flowers; its color is not as dark red as a carnation. Thus we think about what we have seen and felt and by this mental relating we are able to understand the rose and retain our impression of it in a way we otherwise could not. This is particularly true when we put into words, and especially written words, what the rose was like and its meaning to us as we responded to it in delight and appreciation. Should we express this as poetry, then when we reread our poem we might to a considerable degree recall the original experience and possibly even recover something of our sense of joy as well. That is to say, the raw experience by itself is evanescent and hardly meaningful *until* it is put into thought and words which relate it to the rest of our human experience. It is in this relating by thought that we come to understand and appreciate fully the experience. Experiences about which we do not think remain vague combinations of impressions which are essentially meaningless. This leads us to the conclusion that experience without thought and words is blind, vague, and quite without significance. On the other hand, as we have said, words and formulations without experience are likely to be abstract and lifeless—counters (like chessmen) to be pushed about and made into a game of the intellect unrelated to life. Basic experience (or raw experience) thus receives its meaning in and through thought, while for thought to be related creatively to life, experience is needed to give it starting point and content.

Let us turn now to the meaning of the foregoing for religious experience. If we try to imagine a religious experience in its immediate state, apart from interpretation and relationship to the rest of our experience, what is its actual nature? Although we cannot avoid using words here, we might try as best we can to avoid interpretation by saying simply that the experience is one of joy, uplift of spirit, loss of depression, awe, or a feeling of increase of being. If we stopped at this point, what possible value would such experience have for life? Not very much, in all truth. Its value for life appears in what we do with what has come to us, in the meaning of these inner states. The religious experience is actually fairly meaningless *until* we relate it to our whole understanding of life and in this relating interpret it and give it wider perspective, incorporating it into the

web of our life. In doing this, religious thought which leads toward theology plays an essential part.

As we understand that religious thought, and particularly theological creeds or systems, are not themselves religious experience but are rather attempts to formulate such experience, how then *ought* we to evalute this thought or these systems? We would suggest that such creeds must not be taken literally, for they always point to mysteries that cannot be contained within human vocabulary. They had better be regarded as essentially akin to poetry in purpose although not in form, for poetry, as we have noticed, communicates not only the nature of an experience but also its *meaning*. The Nicene Creed and the doctrine of the Trinity, this implies, should be read not as abstract description but rather as appreciation—the former of the meaning of Christ; the latter of the depth of being of God.

THEOLOGY AS RESULTING FROM RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

All valid religious thought has its roots in past religious experience, of individuals and of groups. The experiencer sought to find words by which he could understand (in terms of his other experiences and understandings of life) what had happened to him. He had to do this, we are maintaining, before the experience could become meaningful. The words and ideas he used were, necessarily, derived from his culture, in which he participated. It could not be otherwise. When Moses experienced the burning bush, for instance, his understanding of what had taken place was naturally one rooted in the general religious concepts of his day. However, this does not mean that one may not gain validly new insights which rise above the general concepts; every prophet and spiritual leader does gain such creative insight. It does mean, however, that the experience arises from the kind of religion in which it is found and is interpreted in terms congenial to that religion. The great prophets, for example, built upon the Yahwehism of their day and did not depart fundamentally from it. Jesus built upon the faith of Israel of his time. We repeat that the religious experience which comes to sensitive souls is inevitably given its interpretation and meaning within the general framework of understanding in which the experience takes place. The mystics illustrate the point also.

Those poetic souls (if we may call them such) who received these experiences were more interested in conveying their meaning than in giving descriptions of their inner feelings. Less important for Moses (or Jesus) than attempting any description of the God who had spoken to him was his sense of the significance of the occurrence. He had been called to perform the

function of a prophet—to call the Hebrew people to a destiny that would in time make of them a great people under God. This meaning became Moses' message to Pharaoh and the Hebrews. As the Hebrews accepted this message and acted upon it their understanding (that is, the content of their religious thought) developed. They came to believe that Yahweh was a covenant-making God who had chosen them as his people. He was seen to be awesome and jealous, yet also faithful and trustworthy, righteous and merciful. Thus, through the experience first of Moses and then of the Hebrews, their theology developed, conserving what was felt to be essential in those experiences and providing a foundation for later thought and experience. It is valid to say that without Moses and the later prophets there *could* have been no historical Jesus.

Religious thought thus conserves the past and prepares the way for the future. Much as the principles of science conserve the discoveries of the past and make possible the new, and more complete and precise, discoveries of the future, so do theologies that are taken as living formulations of experience conserve the past and lead on to the future. And just as foolish as would be those scientists who would destroy all that the past preserves for them in the name of fresh discovery are those people who would throw out what two thousand years of Christian thought and a thousand and more years of earlier Hebrew thought present to us as foundation for our fresh, new discoveries and their meanings. In both instances the result would be not gain, but inestimable loss.

THEOLOGY AS DEFENDER FROM ERROR

Religious thought is not only conserver of the past and guide into the future, but is also our guard against error. It provides us with the vast treasures of understanding derived from the best of human thought and experience over the millenia of years. When the insights it has won with such great effort are discarded, we are exposed without defense to the strongest and most vocal concepts of our culture—ideas with *shallow* roots and little to recommend them many times except their vigor and novelty. We then exchange the wealth of the past for flashy and superficial opinions of the present. Let us examine a few illustrations of this point. As one result of the emphases of the Enlightenment, a period which might be dated as starting about 1700, man has been considered basically good, ready to respond with goodwill to reasonable presentation of truth. This has led to a highly optimistic view of man, as Wilmer Cooper was at pains to show, and one which we have now come to see was mistaken in its emphases. Those who acted

upon this view, whether in family, community, or nation, were acting upon an understanding which fails to do full justice to the fact that man is swayed by factors other than reason and that he is a mixture of the good and the evil. Christian theology, followed by George Fox and Quaker thought, knew that this was true. Man is "made in the image of God" but is also a "sinner," rebelling against his own creator and acting against his fellow man. Efforts directed toward helping our fellow men are unrealistic and ultimately will be vitiated if we think all men basically good. Christian theology would have guarded us from such an error, product of a relatively short period of philosophical thought. Let us take a second example. If we assume that the "Inner Light" is a native spark of divinity in every man, part of his "native equipment," we are in effect claiming that all good lies within ourselves and that what has been called of old the "grace of God" is not necessary for us. Believing this, we will surely miss the path of the life of the spirit, for our true good, as theology tells us, lies not in ourselves but in God, and only as we approach him in the spirit of self-denial do we find deliverance. Meaningful religious experience *comes* to us, not from ourselves but as a gift to the waiting, dedicated soul. Again, theology in its ancient wisdom delivers us from error of thought and of mistaken practice. A third instance has to do with many of us believing that the most important need of man is economic betterment. This idea, with that degree of truth which does adhere to it, is another modern one, derived from an economic interpretation of man. It comes as something of a shock to those who have helped improve men economically that their good deeds have not solved problems of greed, anger, pride, and listlessness.

Since all that we do from day to day depends upon our attitudes and values and these in turn depend upon how we see and understand life, it follows that as theology does embody insights into truth derived from vast experience in the past it acts as guardian to keep us from wandering into those partial truths and those untruths about life which appear temporarily in every generation.

EARLY FRIENDS AND THEOLOGY

Although some Friends have claimed that early Quakers had no theology, it seems clear from the articles published in issues of this magazine that there was a very definite explicit theology in the thinking of George Fox. No one can question that Barclay developed a theological system which informed Friends for well over two centuries and is once again beginning to receive the kind of attention it deserves. The great discovery

of Friends was not something totally disconnected in their own thinking from Christian understandings, and comprehended and taught by them as a new form of religion. Rather, they claimed to have discovered in their own experience the living center of Christianity. As they turned to the Christian Scriptures they found, to their joy, that in them the same Spirit which they knew experimentally was expressing himself. Hence the Scriptures spoke to them livingly and freshly.

The center of their religious life was, then, their own experience, but this experience was rooted and grounded in the Christian past: it threw light upon that past, and was interpreted by it, even while it added new elements of insight and understanding. Newness of life and freshness of insight, coming through personal experience, made the Christian past one with their own experience. Here was a freshness of *Christian* experience which these Friends believed to be the true Christianity. Once again the Light of Christ became, as for Paul, the director of their lives, giving them conviction, power, unity, and the ability to bring to life the Seed in other seekers as well. In such fashion as this did they describe what had happened to them. In them experience and religious understanding came into unity, making for a vital movement among men, as a union of this kind always does. Not a vague, unrooted, orphaned mysticism, on the one hand, nor abstract creedalism on the other, but religious experiences and commitment joined to historic religious understandings which gave these experiences their meaning—these together were early Quakerism.

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN OUR DAY

We are saying that when religious experience and religious thought are separated vital religion ceases to exist. Those Friends today who emphasize the "Quaker silence" are very likely to have a largely empty silence if they disconnect it from its Christian foundations. The kind of religious experience that rises from it will be of a very vague kind, incapable of forming a virile religious community or of sustaining our historic Quaker testimonies. The loss of religious thought leaves us with no foundation upon which such experiences as we may have can be interpreted and assimilated; with no expectation in worship or understanding of the meaning of what has moved within us. Having divested ourselves of the great treasures of theology we are, as it were, beginners starting afresh, amateurs of the spirit, having to spy out the land anew, without landmarks. Christian thought, on the other hand, informs us what the nature of ultimate reality is, what we ourselves are and where to look for regeneration, and it sets up our goal in life.

Within Quaker life there is much *implicit* theology, but this holds unsuspected dangers, as we have already suggested, just because it is present without being recognized and hence without being examined clearly or related logically to our other understandings. In our use of terms like Inward Light, the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man we are using implicit theological ideas, for it is surely not rationally demonstrable that God's light dwells in men, nor that all men are truly brothers of each other. The very form of silent worship also carries theological implications. These ideas and others as well may be the last vestiges of earlier Quaker theology as it has been affected by later rationalistic thought. The result is one of vast weakness, for we are weak not only in thought but also in experience, and more to the point, perhaps, as we look to the future, there can be no great outbreak of experience in years to come without a foundation of thought sufficient to bear it.

In conclusion, I am saying that religious thought has its legitimate and necessary place, but that this is a place which it may not overstep. It cannot replace spiritual experience but is, rather, the preserver of the meaning of such experience. It may not take the place of works, for these are the expression of the responsibilities laid upon the dedicated Christian. The purpose of this Editorial is not to ask Friends to adopt wholesale the theological baggage of the past two millenia. Its purpose is, rather, to beg us not to neglect the treasures of those two thousand years of experience and thought. I believe that as we combine our search for God through prayer and worship with immersion in Christian thought, making that thought our own, we may then begin to experience anew in this our day the strong movement of the Spirit that will establish our community anew. We may then be able to echo, with George Fox, the words, "There is one, even Christ Jesus" who has spoken to our conditions, and this *we* may then know experimentally.

Calvin Keene

Early Friends and the Work of Christ

ARTHUR O. ROBERTS

The Quaker movement during the tumultuous years of the Long Parliament, the Interregnum, and the Restoration in England constituted a religious answer to questions raised during a period of upheaval in which institutional and philosophical foundations for authority were shaken—a situation for which we are not hard put to find parallels today.

The doctrines of Christ which the early Friends preached were testimonies to the revelation of God within their own experience. Theirs was a revealed theology—revealed in the Bible and (to their supreme joy) in human experience; it was rich with religious language. Sometimes carefully ordered, as in Barclay; mystical, as in Penington; or fervently evangelistic, as in Fox, it conveyed conviction. The modes of their religious expression, however, should not be allowed to obscure the more important issues of theology to which their experiences testified, for those who participated in what Hugh Barbour aptly calls "The Quaker Awakening" claimed an encounter with Christ beyond all outward knowledge *about* him. Early Friends rejoiced to go beyond "notions" to Life itself. They accepted God and the Bible with its explanations about God and man and found in direct spiritual knowledge the meaning of the New Covenant which they had hitherto seen from afar. Thus the experiential theology of early Friends found its definitions in the revelation of God and not merely in religious inferences which natural man might draw.

As with Paul on the Damascus road, the enigmatic Christ who beckoned early Friends by the disciples' testimony became known to them first as the One whom their sinful lives had "crucified afresh," and then as the One who brought forgiveness of sins and the new birth. It is within such a context of superna-

turalism that William Penn writes of the state of devotion: "Religion fell from experience to tradition, and worship from power to form, from life to letter."

Thus George Fox generalizes with perhaps more accuracy in his day than in ours, "that all Christendom believes that Christ is come, and is risen, and that Jesus is Christ the Son of God," but insists that beyond this affirmation it is necessary that people ought all "to receive him, and to walk in him, and abide in him." Robert Barclay lays the groundwork for his *Apology* by stating that the way to true knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, is not the testimony of man drawing religious inferences from his own actions, but is rather the testimony of the Holy Spirit within—a testimony which Barclay claimed was ultimately self-authenticating yet never contradicting "the outward testimony of scriptures, or right and sound reason."

While not disdaining other forms of knowledge, nor their utility, Barclay stresses direct revelation as the right way by which God is known. The natural man "of the largest capacity, and by the best words, even scripture words" writes Barclay, cannot understand the mysteries of God's kingdom as well as the weakest child who tastes them, having them "revealed inwardly and objectively by the Spirit."

Our spiritual forebears represent a rebound from radical Puritanism in the direction of greater spiritual objectivity and its corollary, authority. They labelled as false such idolatrous images or substitutes for the true God as the Roman Catholic Mass and the Protestant memorial supper, the Fifth-monarchist task force which besieged London, the Digger's Utopia, the New Model Army, and Cromwell's Commonwealth. Their gospel was no "faith mediated by symbols," but a faith mediated by the risen Christ who saves and leads the Church, which is his body. Early Friends intended the intensification of doctrine and not its diminution.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

The Quakers accepted the deity of Christ in an orthodox Christian sense as a basic tenet of faith: God who reveals himself has done so supremely by his Son. They were confident regarding the Incarnation as well as the new birth. George Fox spoke

of two proofs given by the apostles to show that Jesus was the Christ, namely, the testimony of "Moses, and the law, and the prophets" and the personal spiritual examination to prove "whether or no Jesus Christ was within them."

Early Friends accepted the scriptural teaching that Jesus is the promised Messiah for whom the Jews waited, predicted in the Old Testament by promises, figures, types, shadows, and prophets, and so vindicated by the apostles. The events of his ministry likewise showed Jesus to be the true Christ—his preaching, doctrine, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Holy Spirit, and appearing in his people in his saving work. This last is the response which the Quakers made to what seemed to them to be merely a professing church. In answer to the question, "What is the True Confession of Christ?" Isaac Penington writes, "Friends, I witness it to be this; a confession of his life, a confession of his power. To confess the present living appearance of Christ, that is to confess Christ." This statement is followed by exhortations based upon the scriptural admonition in which Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Fox explained to the Turks that Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary, to the "priest Stephens" that Jesus Christ suffered and died not as he was God but as he was man, and to Mohamet the Fourth (who had bragged to Emperor Leopold that he was "commander and guardian of your crucified God") that it was as a man that Christ was crucified.

In controversy, on the other hand, Fox denied the word "human" as applying to the nature of Christ. I agree with Canby Jones that Fox greatly confused the issue. Fox wanted to protect the person of Jesus Christ from allegations of sinfulness which in his mind the word "human" carried. Elsewhere he speaks of "Christ, according to the flesh, was of Abraham," i.e., a man, not just a body inhabited by the Christ. In the scripturally-loaded piece, "What we believe of Christ," Fox denies the *term* "trinity" but asserts that Friends *do* believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, rejecting as false any charges to the contrary.

Docetism has been attributed to the early Quaker movement, and Rachel King suspects Fox of Apollinarianism with a ten-

dency to Sabellianism. Although excessive emotionalism produced much loose language and some loose conduct, from which heterodox views of the human-divine nature of Christ might be inferred, I think these charges cannot be taken very seriously.

As far as George Fox is concerned, his writings, although not systematic by any stretch of the imagination, do show a coherence to the principle that Christ really died for men and really does impart new spiritual life to those who receive his salvation. On this theme he hammers away with evangelistic exuberance! Some of the more characteristic terms with which he describes Christ are these: Christ the Light, Christ the Seed, Christ the Life, and Christ the Word. Concerning the first, he teaches that Christ is the one who shows up evil within a man and brings him into unity with God. The term Christ the Light (*never* "inner light") is his way of explaining the contemporary nature of Christ, and is predicated upon a view of spiritual illumination which is from God to man. Man by himself does not possess spiritual knowledge sufficient for salvation. The term "Seed" has reference to Christ as alluded to prophetically in Genesis 3:15. Christ is the seed of the woman who bruises the serpent's head. There are not many seeds but rather one issue in whom all of God's covenants with man find fulfillment, in whom election to salvation stands. The term "Life" conveys the existential quality of Christ within the experience of man. Christ is the New Adam whose real presence in the converted, communing heart renders both mass and memorial unnecessary—Christ himself is here. This is no theory of absorption into the Infinite, but rather a doctrine of adoption by the Living God.

The term "Word," reflecting the heavy Quaker dependence upon Johannine *logos* formulations, depicts the revelation of God as personal communication. However true the principles and statements of the Bible may be—and the early Quakers believed them to be true and inspired of God—they are verified ultimately in the heart by the revelation which God gives man through his personal Word, Jesus Christ. Such is the substance of the arguments which Fox makes in many a treatise and polemic and which Barclay argues out in terms of the "primary" rule for the Spirit and the "secondary" rule for the Bible.

Robert Barclay's significant contribution to early Quaker Christology lies in his explanation of Christ as the "universal and saving light." It is his link between special revelation and general revelation, an "evangelical principle" as he calls it, which guards against the "false doctrines of the Pelagians, Semi-Pelagians, Socinians," and others who exalt the light of nature and the "liberty of man's will" so as to claim an earned salvation. His view, to the contrary, "excludes the natural man from having any place or portion in his own salvation . . . until he be first . . . actuated by God's Spirit."

It is an anomaly of our history that a doctrine amplifying the meaning of "Christ dying for all," subject to man's acceptance by faith, should have been used in later years to support a theory of the natural goodness of man. Perhaps Barclay anticipated the abuse which might come, for he cautioned, "We do not hereby intend any ways to lessen or derogate from the atonement and sacrifice of Jesus Christ; but on the contrary do magnify and exalt it. . . . we firmly believe it was necessary that Christ should come, that by his death and sufferings he might offer up himself a sacrifice to God for our sins . . . so we believe that the remission of sins which any partake of, is only in and by virtue of that most satisfactory sacrifice, and no otherwise."

A revival movement always suffers some loss of perspective, and in the case of the Quakers this involved failure to transmit effective knowledge of the Bible. The entire Puritan movement shared in this to some extent; many of the more radical groups disappeared entirely from the scene, but because the Quakers claimed direct inspiration and leadings, the calculated risk of their "enthusiasm" was even greater. They did not always realize that their treasure—Christ within—lay in earthen vessels. Richard Baxter, the worthy antagonist, accused the Quakers of denying any such person as Jesus Christ who suffered at Jerusalem, and asserted that Quaker usage of the name is speaking "allegorically and equivocally." The Quakers repudiated such a charge repeatedly. Actually, Baxter's words are truer of Winstanley than of the early Friends; for while they may have found it difficult on occasion to distinguish between the movings of the infallible Spirit and the inclinations of their fallible minds,

the Quakers certainly intended a deepening of the meaning of the Christ of history. Baxter's accusation may better apply to some modern claimants to the Quaker heritage who have fallen into the old Digger error of relegating the good-evil struggle to an entirely local cast, with the Gospel events providing symbolic staging for Everyman's psychological struggles in the process of coming into being.

In spite of distortions which may have arisen, the Quaker movement did give to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and to man's spiritual experience a Christ-centered structure and authority. Many were the religious streams within radical Puritanism which dried up with the return to England of a tolerably stable monarchy. It is a testimony either to the integrity of their ideas or to the tenacity of their errors that the Quaker stream continued: I should like to believe that it is the former. To take seriously the self-disclosure of Jesus Christ when he said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me," is no small theological task. According to which answer is given, the stature of Christ is either reduced or enhanced. To the task of enhancing the meaning of Christ the Quaker ministers gave themselves assiduously as men themselves touched by the redeeming Christ. The unity of Jesus Christ in history and in experience is the foundation of both Quaker doctrine and evangelistic outreach.

THE WORK OF CHRIST

The One who spoke to Fox's condition as a youth is the real Pascal Lamb whose blood wet the hillside in Palestine. To Fox, Christ is the agent of redemption and his work is the transforming of the natures of men. The term "blood of Christ" appears often in early Quaker literature, conveying to the writers the same connotations of spiritual deliverance from the guilt and power of sin as it does to the Christian today. It is doubtless safe to say that the early Friends were eclectic insofar as particular theories of the Atonement are concerned. Their language was biblical and thus encompassed a variety of viewpoints. This may not work out neatly for the theologian but perhaps it testifies to the truer nature of Christianity as experienced. One might maintain that Fox holds to the "ransom theory" because he

makes reference to Christ having delivered us from the devil, or to the "satisfaction theory" because he speaks of Christ paying all our "debts of sin." In his *No Cross, No Crown,* William Penn gives words which imply the "moral influence theory" of atonement, as in the famous passage about Christ the "victorious captain of our salvation," greater than all the leaders of the world, "the most perfect pattern of self-denial" for us to follow if we would come to glory.

Beyond the particular biblical metaphors by which the Quakers described the Atonement stands their emphasis upon the scope of that redemptive action. The Puritan "wayfaring and warfaring" down through life to the Celestial City had for the Quakers a victorious arrival in this life as well as in the next. "Glory be to the Lord forever" writes Fox in an Epistle (sounding startlingly like a camp-meeting Methodist), "thousands of these way-faring men are come to find their way, Christ Jesus, and though fools, yet shall not err therein. . ." The theme of "possession, not profession" appears over and over again in Fox's *Works.* Christ had come to proclaim the year of jubilee within the hearts and lives of men gathered into his New Covenant. The revolution which the early Quakers found was a revolution of the Spirit, who baptizes the soul with cleansing fire. As William Penn phrased it, "the heart of man is the seat of sin, and where he is defiled, he must be sanctified; and where sin lives, there it must die: it must be crucified."

The Quaker awakening was a holiness movement and must be so considered. Quaker sermons and writings sound forth the news of an atonement which can lift a man above sin. Fox considered it a travesty upon the grace and power of Christ for Christians to be resigned to a life of sin while upon the earth. He charged bluntly that the doctrine which teaches such resignation to sinful living "nullifies the sacrifice of Christ, makes Christ's dying in vain, the one offering of no value, and his blood of none effect which cleanses from all sin." No Catholic plea for purgatorial purging nor Calvinist plea for perfection at the grave can be sustained in the face of the more ample provisions of the grace of God.

Along with Barclay and others, Fox shared the orthodox concept of the moral depravity of man, but insisted that grace was not only imputed in forgiveness but also imparted in sanctification. Man's sinful nature may be changed. It is instructive that after George Fox was released from a six months' jail sentence at Derby, on charges of blasphemy because he testified to being sanctified, he was put in again for refusing to accept a command in the army of the Commonwealth. His pacifist statement at that time, "I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars," reflects his understanding and experience of the sanctifying power of Christ's baptism. The whole episode stands as a parable for today: our evangelism should take into account the implications of holiness for practical life, and our pacifism should recognize carnality as the source of evil and should be aware of the less violent or even non-violent weapons with which carnal man fights to secure the objects of his will.

Christ's baptism with the Holy Spirit was conceived of as that which makes the outward sacrifice of Christ significant inwardly through God's grace and man's faith. Justification is complete in sanctification. In speaking of redemption as "one work of grace" George Fox shows holiness to be an integral part of salvation rather than something tacked on as an extra benefit for the more particular believer. The experiences of Fox and others demonstrate how this grace was received through inward crises until assurance of victory was given. Isaac Penington wrote: "There is a power in Christ to perfect the work of redemption in the heart; to sanctify the creature wholly, in body, soul, and spirit. . . ." He testified that one can know when this redemptive grace has completed its leavening force and declares that "this is not the voice of deceit, but of truth."

In "A Tender Visitation," William Penn exhorts those who are tired of their sins to keep "the holy watch of Jesus" until "the wicked one be rooted up and burned in the baptism of Christ." The New World colonizer has left us an excellent outline of the doctrines of salvation "in their natural and experimental order." This order he describes as consisting of repentance and perfection, the two basic doctrines of the work of

Christ in the heart of man. The first is comprehended by man in three "operations": "sight of sin," "sense and sorrow" for it, and "amendment" for the time to come. By this sort of repentance God's forgiveness may be received and the soul may come to be purged of its sinful nature. "None can come to know Christ to be their sacrifice that reject him as their Sanctifier."

Penn's second doctrine is perfection, or the life of holiness. Such is the purpose of Christ's coming and pertains to the life which belongs to Christ. It is ours not by nature but by faith and adoption.

Robert Barclay has been attacked as the theological villain who ruined a lovely non-doctrinal movement by his scholastic formulations. Fox may have been less precise than Barclay but he was surely just as doctrinal. Barclay describes salvation thus:

> The first is the redemption performed and accomplished by Christ for us in his crucified body without us: the other is the redemption wrought by Christ in us, which no less properly is called and accounted a redemption than the former. The first then is that whereby man, as he stands in the fall, is put into a capacity of salvation, and hath conveyed unto him a measure of that power, virtue, spirit, life, and grace that was in Christ Jesus. . . . The second is that whereby we witness and know this pure and perfect redemption in ourselves, purifying, cleansing, and redeeming us from the power of corruption, and bringing us into unity, favour, and friendship with God.

Concerning holiness he speaks of the crucifixion of the "body of death," i.e., the carnal nature of man, wherein the heart becomes so subject to truth as to be "free from actual sinning and transgressing of the law of God and in that respect perfect." This state, however, admits of growth and of the possibility of sinning "where the mind doth not most diligently and watchfully attend unto the Lord."

Testimonies from other Friends confirm the perfectionist nature of the early Quaker movement. As a youth of seventeen, William Caton testified to "the cleansing, purging, and sanctifying;" John Audland, who had been an Independent preacher, heard Fox declare that it was the present portion for believers to know the indwelling Christ and to have their bodies "prepared, sanctified, and made fit temples." It reached his heart. Francis Howgill, hearing that same three-hour sermon at Firbank Fell,

was made to realize his own dissatisfaction with accepting Christ's bearing of our guilt upon the cross without allowing Christ to do something to remove the "root of sin" remaining to plague the conscience and enfeeble the will of man. The same note of victory sounds from the testimonies of Edward Burrough, John Crook, Stephen Crisp, Thomas Story, William Dewsbury (who is careful to date his experience of victory), and others. These endured public ridicule, lost their possessions and their legal privileges, and sometimes their lives, to preach to others about the work of Christ which they had experienced. To them non-holiness teachings were, in the phrase of Isaac Penington, the "dark doctrines of the night."

RELEVANCE FOR TODAY

Despite a diversity of expression and conduct among early Friends, despite cultural and social differences, despite extravagant claims, there yet remains a steady testimony to the nature and work of Christ which commends itself to our serious review, a central conviction that Jesus Christ confronts man experientially, offering the pardon of God for sins and the power of God to cleanse from sin. Sometimes we read in popular articles (as if it were a point in our favor) that one may be a Quaker and believe anything or nothing. Perhaps such notions are to be expected from the public when we have sometimes become unsure or even silent concerning our beliefs, or have left only a testimony that man has religious feelings which should be respected. The relevance of this review of our doctrines concerning the person and work of Christ may be illustrated as follows. A few years ago, in response to a comment of mine appearing in connection with a magazine article about Friends, to the effect that according to widely-used disciplinary provisions, people are admitted to membership among Friends on the basis of belief in Jesus Christ and evidence of their union with him, a Friend active in one of the larger monthly meetings in America rebuked me, stating that in their meeting belief in Jesus Christ was neither *the* basis nor even *a* basis for membership. The task of relating the principle of universal light to the person and work of Jesus Christ has been a difficult one for Friends. Under various theological pressures, aided by religious romanticism and

the tides of history, the historic position of early Friends has been weakened. The ultimate departure presents a picture in which God is given purely immanentist status, man's natural goodness is placed as the *sine qua non,* Christ is given purely symbolic meaning, and holiness is transmuted into schemes for social realignment.

But in recent years the turmoil of the world has helped men once more to see the otherness of God and to recognize sin in its ugliness and its endemic nature. Both conservative and neo-orthodox theologies have bared the root of sin which contaminates all man's best efforts and issues in pride. There is greater assurance today that man is sinful than that he can be redeemed, and greater confidence in God's grace than in his providing sanctification. It is certainly not clear that Bultmann or Tillich have cleared the field for an encounter with the risen, living Christ, who offers us his Pentecostal victory in the way in which Fox and Barclay testified. It is not clear that Carl Henry or Edward J. Carnell speak with comparable conviction about the sanctified life.

We do well to recognize the complexity of evil, the insidious nature of temptation and self-pride. We need to recapture the meaning of grace which protects from a sterile legalism, to recognize the broad implications of obedient discipleship, of living above the world while in the midst of it. But in so doing we ought to recognize the early Quaker positions and their claims for insight into the revelation of God through Scripture and through personal experience with Christ. There is "preaching up sin" today; and the warning of William Penn is appropriate, to be careful lest we "sin more freely because at his cost." Between legalism and self-indulgence winds the highway of holiness of which Isaiah spoke and which has been the desire of all true Christians. If our researches into early Quaker history are to afford us spiritual insights as well as historical knowledge we shall ask God to reveal his truth to us through Scripture and through Jesus Christ known within immediate experience.

Comments

LORTON HEUSEL

Arthur Roberts has presented a scholarly paper which reveals a comprehensive knowledge of the works of George Fox and other early Friends. A capable theologian and master of vocabulary, Dr. Roberts writes with artistic expression. It is with deep respect for him and his abilities and with sincere appreciation for his paper that I offer the following remarks.

It seems to me that Arthur Roberts builds his case on three affirmations: (1) Quakerism is Christian and "orthodox;" (2) Friends based their religious authority on personal encounter with the living contemporary Christ in the Pauline sense rather than on reasoning and theological formulations; and (3) the scope of the Quaker view of the Atonement involved not only divine forgiveness of the sinner but also his sanctification.

Regarding the first point Dr. Roberts asserts with finality that orthodoxy provided the early Quaker view of the person of Christ, but he allows for great diversity of belief and experience with respect to the work of Christ. It is difficult to see how Friends could agree upon "Who he is" without having found some measure of agreement as to "What he did" on the cross.

The cross stands as the lasting clue to Christ's person and his work, for who he is and what he has done for all men are there disclosed in clearest light. If early Friends had diverse interpretations of the Atonement as the writer suggests, then surely we have isolated a fundamental weakness in Quaker theology. The deity of Christ can hardly be defended as a more objective fact in history than the once-for-allness of what he did on the cross.

Furthermore, if Dr. Roberts is correct in his appraisal of early Friends' views of the work of Christ, it would certainly open the way for greater conversation between the various branches of Friends today. While Evangelical Friends have held

tenaciously to the divinity of Christ, it is largely not this fact that creates schismatic fervor among Friends. Rather it is the tendency on the part of the Evangelical to insist also upon the nature of Christ's work, which usually involves an interpretation of either the ransom or satisfaction theory or some combination of the two.

The second affirmation raises questions as to just what the content of an "experience of Christ" was or is and whether or not the Quaker experience of the living Christ was limited to the immediate disclosure or Damascus Road type of encounter. The Quaker emphasis on the "Light" available to every man and on the immediacy of the living Christ implies a coziness of man with Christ which may exaggerate the meaning of early Quaker imagery. Certainly we cannot discount the Pauline type of encounter of Fox and his associates on some occasions, but to suggest that the Quaker doctrines of Christ and his work hinge upon one Divine-human communication pattern would be to place serious limitations both upon Quakerism and upon the Holy Spirit as well. While Fox may have honestly believed that it was only "Christ Jesus" who could speak to his condition, it is obvious throughout his *Journal* that he himself became a medium through whom Christ spoke, acted, and became real to many of his contemporaries. Anne Wilson certainly was the vessel through whom Christ became real to Samuel Bownas.

Arthur Roberts asserts that Quakerism represents an attempt toward greater objectivity in worship than was found in Puritanism or the Catholic Mass. While this may have been desirable, it is a question as to how free from personal feeling, bias, and prejudice any personal experience was or can be. If Willard Sperry is correct in his book *Reality in Worship,* the Catholic Mass is more objective than Protestant worship and may be near to Quaker worship in the mystical sense, i.e., at the point at which the Quaker completely immerses his mind and will in the Mind and Will of the Infinite. It is my conviction that an honest look at Quakerism reveals that the infallible Spirit has worked through fallible minds and finite vessels to accomplish his purposes and that the Spirit has not required transcendence of subjectivity in order to make holy obedience a possibility.

The third affirmation Arthur Roberts makes regarding the scope of the Atonement in terms of holiness, defines a Quaker emphasis which has needed clarification since the rise of the Neo-orthodox attack on the liberal view of man. Quakerism accepts the orthodox interpretation of the human predicament but it sees in God's action in Christ the redemptive power and grace which enable the believer not only to be forgiven but to live "above" sin.

I place "above" in quotes because I believe the holiness emphasis has a tendency to get out of hand by being equated with some "humanly contrived moral code or standard of conduct," to use Wilmer Cooper's appropriate warning. Certainly Quakerism offers a corrective to any attempt to resign to a life of sin but it can never allow itself to become cloaked in a self-righteous, moralistic perspective which assumes that because perfection is possible, it is easily achieved through diligent ethical effort on the one hand or by divine action through sanctification on the other. Frankly, I have always been about as skeptical of the authenticity of those who claim to be "saved" and "sanctified" as I am of those who claim to have achieved through ethical striving. Luther's observation that "a Christian is one who under the Holy Spirit is continually becoming a Christian" is quite near to the Quaker view of holiness. There is always room for growth.

I appreciated Arthur Roberts' reference to William Penn's "A Tender Visitation" with its outline of the doctrine of salvation. But I do feel the need for more discussion of the meaning of the cross to early Friends, for the cross is the central fact of the work of Christ. Why was the cross necessary in order for man to achieve a life of perfection and holiness? Why was the cross necessary to heal the broken relation between sinful man and the Holy God? Is there a relationship between the redemptive work of God on the cross and Friends' "dogged assurance that man, if he does what he is supposed to do, will come out all right?" (a quote from Wilmer Cooper). And what in our religious heritage guides the individual Friend today to understand the relationship between God's redemptive act in Jesus Christ and his continuing action through his redemptive community, the church? And finally, can we find in these early

Quakers a clue as to whether the work of Christ, opening the way for holiness in time, has anything to say about rescuing man for eternity?

Friends' conviction that the Atonement empowered men to walk triumphantly over the earth represents a significant contribution, but the possibility for perfection must certainly be based upon prior assumptions as to how and why God effected the reconciliation of man to himself at Calvary, and it must further be supported by the subsequent assumption that the Christian hope transcends simple victory over sin in time. It seems to me that all of these are dimensions of the Work of Christ, and if our heritage shortchanges us on any in order to extol one (perfection) then we should be prepared to fill in the deficiencies. Harold Loukes has well spoken to modern Quakerism: "When it began, Quakerism was an emphasis on a neglected aspect of the Christian faith; now it must assume a wider responsibility, and seek to transmit the faith (Christian) in all its fulness and depth. If it cannot do so, if it cannot sustain the Christian tradition and transmit the richness of Christian experience, then it has no right to exist at all, a stumbling block to would-be Christians and a source of weakness to the Church."

PAUL A. LACEY

Arthur Roberts' article has had two good effects on me: one has been to stimulate me to more consideration of the meaning of the work of Christ in the early Society of Friends and to modern Quakers; the other has been to remind me forcibly that I am the merest tyro in theological matters. The questions which follow may not be very significant to other readers, and I am sure they will offer Arthur Roberts no trouble, but their answers will be helpful to me.

My first question concerns a matter of emphasis. Arthur Roberts cites early Friends' belief in the primacy of the Spirit over the Scriptures, yet in his article he seems rather to reverse that order. Perhaps it is making too much of the order in which he places the two aspects of revealed theology: "revealed in the Bible and (to their supreme joy) in human experience," but,

if I understand the later reference to the Christ "who beckoned them by the disciples' testimony," this suggests a process of conversion which was not at all common to early Friends. In this they ran counter to the whole pattern of evangelism at the time. If we take Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* as the type of the conversion experience—as he meant it to be—we see that Christian's first step in his pilgrimage was to look into his Bible, where he learned that he must be saved.

But for Fox, what Arthur Roberts calls Christ's "appearing in his people by his saving work" came *before* scriptural teaching of that work. In fact, Fox repeats that he found confirmation of his experiences, *after the fact,* when he read the scriptures. One possible interpretation of this is that one cannot understand the scriptures' account of Christ until he is experienced directly. Fox suggests such an idea in reporting an occasion when he characteristically interrupted a preacher telling his congregation that the scriptures "were the touchstone and judge by which they were to try all doctrines, religions, and opinions, and to end all controversy," by shouting "Oh no, it is not the scriptures" but the Holy Ghost which is the touchstone. He says elsewhere that "the Gospel was the power of God, which was preached before Matthew, Mark, Luke and John or any of them were printed or written, and was preached to every creature who might never see nor hear of the four books aforesaid."

I have a feeling that our perspective on the early Society would change greatly if we examined closely the nature of the claims that Friends were in the spirit by which the scriptures were given forth. To be in that spirit would not make the scriptures any less precious, but they would then be by no means essential for a right knowledge of Christ. Of course, there is a certain unreality in arguing that Fox and early Friends generally did not know of the historical Jesus Christ through the Bible. But if the principle enunciated above is valid, we are then required to answer whether experience of the work of Christ within the heart of man is sufficient for salvation, or whether it is impossible to experience the *work* of Christ without knowing the *works* of Jesus Christ, for which the Bible would be indispensible. Or, to put it another way, does *knowledge* require

information? How we answer this question may determine how serious we consider the "failure to transmit effective knowledge of the Bible," of which Arthur Roberts speaks. It may also help us determine how a vigorous Society of Friends should testify to the work of Christ in the modern world. Incidentally, I would like to have Arthur Roberts tell what he thinks caused the Society's failure in this respect.

In this connection I should say that I share Arthur Roberts' concern over the fact that Christ is given only a symbolic value in much contemporary Quaker thought, but I am even more concerned that the same allegorizing process has reduced Fox's Spirit—the Holy Spirit—to the spirit—meaning a kind of mood, tone, or emotional cast to principles. When this happens, the contrast between the Spirit of Christ and the historical Christ, which is made so often, becomes meaningless. Reducing the Spirit to a metaphor explains, I think, what Arthur Roberts describes as the "anomaly of our history" that doctrines affirming Christ's redemptive death for all men should come to support the idea of man's natural goodness.

For early Friends, however, to be in the Spirit which was before the scriptures constituted a claim that they were not merely in the apostolic tradition but that they were the Church. Fox seems always to have challenged "professors" to affirm that they had the same outpourings of the Holy Ghost as the apostles did. His satisfaction at their discomfiture indicates how strongly he felt that only Friends could honestly claim that there was no diminishing of the Spirit among them. It was this claim which gave substance to Friends' sense of being children of God. In this phrase, too, many Friends have seen an affirmation of the natural goodness of man, whereas Fox uses the idea to express a belief in the perfectibility of man through the work of Christ.

> Now I was sent to turn people from darkness to the light that they might receive Christ Jesus, for to as many as should receive him in his light, I saw that he would give power to become the sons of God, which I had attained by receiving Christ.

I have only one other question, and it is less substantive than semantic. Arthur Roberts speaks of a rebound among early Friends in the direction of "spiritual objectivity and its

corollary, authority." He ends the same paragraph by saying that early Friends intended the intensification of doctrine, not its diminution. I do not understand the phrase "spiritual objectivity." I wonder, too, what relation authority has to doctrine. Certainly the early Quaker attitude toward the Holy Spirit establishes it as the source of authority, as the passage quoted above emphasizes. Friends did not intend to diminish authority by a process of leveling-down, though that is what seems to have happened. But is this the kind of authority—the authority of the person led by the Holy Spirit—to which the paragraph refers? If so, how does this intensify doctrine?

If we apply to Arthur Roberts' article his own criterion, that historical research should bring spiritual insights, we realize how well he has fulfilled his purpose.

T. JOSEPH PICKVANCE

Before reading Arthur O. Roberts' very interesting contribution, I refreshed my memory of George Fox's teachings on the same subject by reading the classified extracts I made some years ago while studying Fox's interpretation of Christianity. I considered it important to see whether Arthur Roberts' account tallied with mine because we need as many *independent* contributions as possible to the debate about whether there was among the early Friends a coherent body of doctrine and of testimonies arising therefrom, about which they had a common understanding and agreement and to which we can refer as the early Quaker Christian message.

The existence of an ordered message is questioned by some Friends on both sides of the Atlantic. It has been suggested to me that the orderliness I believe I have found in the many letters, epistles, and tracts of Fox is not in fact there, but only "read into" them. Henry J. Cadbury, commenting on Lewis Benson's essay in *Quaker Religious Thought* on "The Early Quaker Vision of the Church" says much the same thing. He questions whether "behind Fox's thought there is an impeccable coherence." He has the feeling that in Fox and other early Quaker writers "the discovered coherence is superimposed by the

modern student." Lewis Benson does not report impeccable coherence but claims that "Fox's thought *has* coherence and unity." In the same issue, I notice that Canby Jones gives his opinion that Lewis Benson's was "an essentially true and accurate account of the concept of the Church, held by George Fox and the early Friends." May I add here that I agree completely with Maurice Creasey's lucid account of the 17th Century Quakers' understanding of the significance of Christ.

It was reassuring to find Arthur O. Roberts confirming the views of other students of Fox's thought both by implication and by statements such as: "His writings, although not systematic by any stretch of the imagination, do show a coherence to the principle that Christ really died for men and really does impart life to those who receive his salvation." There appears to be a growing concensus of opinion that there was in fact a common core of early Quaker Christian fundamentals. If those of us who believe this are mistaken, and if the truth is that there was no unified Quaker message, then the practice, which is not just a modern one, of soaking the label off and applying it to any brand of Christianity or universalistic religion to which we ourselves adhere, is hardly one to which we can raise strong objection.

We should not expect to find an impeccable coherence. Some development in every man's thought is to be expected, and some variety of view is inevitable in every group, however closely knit. Modern students will hold various views too. To illustrate the last point: I agree with Arthur O. Roberts that "Seed" is a synonym of Christ. It should be given a capital "S." In my reading of Fox, I have never noted it as referring to spiritual growth, although some students apparently believe it does.

Turning now to deal with particular points in Arthur Roberts' essay, I should like to endorse fully the stress that he lays in his early pages on the Christ-centeredness of early Quaker Christianity. His general conclusion: "The unity of Jesus Christ in history and in experience is the foundation of Quaker doctrine and of their evangelistic outreach," is, I believe, a true generalization about Fox's Christianity. My own studies have perforce been very largely confined to George Fox's writings and

I am grateful to Arthur Roberts for relating them to those of Penn, Penington, and others.

Although his subject is the work of Christ, less than half the essay is devoted to it. Probably the assignment was too large for the space available. Certainly the section on the person of Christ was needed by way of preface. With preliminary and concluding sections, it forms the bulk of the matter. It must be said, therefore, that the treatment of the subject can be regarded only as introductory.

Perhaps I can indicate the wide scope of Quaker thought on the work of Christ by listing the topics mentioned by Arthur Roberts and comparing them with my own analysis of Fox's teachings. He refers to: Christ, the Light that shows us evil and brings us into unity with God; Christ, the universal and saving Light, that is able to save completely; Christ, the Sanctifier, who is able to sanctify wholly; and Christ the Baptiser of the soul with cleansing fire. These are supported by illustrations from the writings of various early Friends.

Fox deals with the following *additional* topics. In a full treatment of the subject, space would be required for a discussion of their inter-relatedness and yet more for a comparative account of the same topics in the writings of other Quaker leaders. My list, which is probably not exhaustive, runs as follows: Christ, the Way and Door to God the Father; Christ, the inward Teacher; Christ, who gives hope; Christ, who gives grace, sufficient in deeps and weakness; Christ, who is our Anchor in times of trouble; Christ the Mediator—"None other to be set up;" Christ, the Prophet, who speaks to his Church now, who opens the book of conscience; Christ, the Bishop, who oversees his Church; Christ, who orders, rules and governs; Christ, the heavenly and spiritual Head of his spiritual members, the Church; Christ the Priest who sanctifies and offers up his Church; Christ, who restores man into a state greater than Adam's, into *himself*—Fox's most daring flight, this! All of these topics recur many times in Fox's writings. True, they touch and sometimes overlap as would be expected when life in a spiritual fellowship is under examination. Yet such is the respect I have come to entertain for George Fox's deep and penetrating spirit and mind that I

would maintain that in each of those mentioned Fox clearly distinguished particular aspects of the work of Christ in the individual or the church. We must, I believe, accept that in Fox we are dealing with a great religious genius and not a muddle-headed enthusiast who embroiled intellectually able and cultured persons like Penn and Penington in the tangles of his thought. Obviously, *Quaker Religious Thought* must return at some time in the future to develop further the great theme that Arthur O. Roberts has so usefully opened up for us.

Response to Comments

ARTHUR O. ROBERTS

The comments are helpful in sharpening up the topic, and I am grateful for them. Joseph Pickvance rightly judges that the main topic, "The Work of Christ," lacks sufficient elaboration. I appreciate his concurrence, however, regarding the importance of the early Quaker view of the person of Christ as basic to an understanding of his work. The two aspects are difficult to separate.

Aside from this matter of imbalance in presentation, I should like to touch on five issues alluded to in the various comments: 1) the nature of early Quaker coherence in regard to Christian fundamentals; 2) the meaning and extent of the diverse interpretations of the atonement held by early Friends; 3) "spiritual objectivity" and the integrity of personal experience of Christ; 4) the relevance of the early Friends' view of holiness; and 5) the relationship of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures to each other.

Obviously, I agree with Joseph Pickvance that George Fox was no "muddle-headed enthusiast" and that we do not impose a unifying coherence upon him by categorizing his writings along theological lines. Pickvance's delineations of the terms by which Fox showed the continuing grace of God are helpful so long as one neither exaggerates metaphor nor disregards a proper use of synonyms. Fox's logic consists of an intuitional centering of biblical truths about which dependent ideas "orbit," in contrast to the more propositional and syllogistic style of Barclay. Quakerism found its unity as an evangelistic awakening within biblical orthodoxy—a revival which centered about the experiential meaning of the atonement of Jesus Christ. To suggest that "true" historic Quakerism consists of a sort of pure religion discoverable when the husks of orthodoxy are removed is to per-

petuate a fable from which I hope we are being delivered. The searching question for us is whether we are prepared to accept as valid today the core of Christian truth which gave unity to the early movement.

This leads to the second issue—one raised by Lorton Heusel—concerning the meaning and extent of the diverse interpretations of the atonement among early Friends. I may not have made clear that the variety of expressions by early Friends concerning the atonement was nevertheless within a framework of substantial agreement about the work of Christ in redeeming men from sin. It is not a question of ransom theory versus substitutionary theory, nor of satisfaction versus moral influence. (We should differentiate also the moral influence theory of the atonement from theories concerning the sufficiency of Jesus as simply a moral teacher.) Biblical metaphors were used, or at least accepted, inclusively by early Friends, all predicated upon redemption through the objective work of Christ upon the cross. They believed his life, death, and resurrection constitute a divine act which is vicarious, unique, sufficient, efficacious, and restorative. Lorton Heusel is certainly correct in stating the objectivity of what Christ did upon the cross.

I can scarcely imagine that what Heusel *interprets* as possibly "a fundamental weakness in Quaker theology" would prove to be a trustworthy bridge for *unity* among Friends! If, however, there were really great strength and solidarity at this point, the case would be different. Heusel ventures an opinion that it may be the insistence on the part of the evangelicals that Christ's work be interpreted along the lines of the ransom and or satisfaction theory which creates "schismatic fervor among Friends." The force of this argument escapes me: if narrowness of interpretation is the cause of schism, why not rather accuse the liberal who abhores ransom, satisfaction, and substitutionary theories and clings to the moral influence theory or some distant approximation thereof? Neither the Bible nor our early Quaker heritage gives us this broad range of terms in order that we might diminish the meaning of the atonement but rather that by fuller illustration we might enhance it! Some misunderstanding among Friends arises, doubtless, because of semantic problems, and

should be corrected, but the bridge to unity must be built by a return to the *wholeness* which characterized the early Quaker experiential understanding of the atoning work of Christ. When we share their belief that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died a unique, redemptory death and has risen from the dead to vindicate his lordship, and that the provisions of God's grace through Jesus Christ are sufficient to remove from believers the guilt, power, and eventually the effects of sin, we are well on the way to recovery and able to handle lesser barriers to spiritual unity. To use a phrase of Paul's in I Corinthians, Christ has not been "parceled out."

In connection with the third issue, "spiritual objectivity" and the integrity of personal experience of Christ, Lorton Heusel questions how free from personal bias spiritual encounter may be; whereas Paul Lacey wants clarification of the term and its relationship to authority. Regarding the meaning of "spiritual objectivity," Lacey anticipates additional clarification by his excellent remarks about the dangers of the allegorizing process. In contrast with certain other radical Puritan groups, Quakers held to an historic Fall, the Incarnate Christ, an actual resurrection, a visible Church, a providential history, experiential salvation, and a real judgment. And the spiritual realities were not less so for early Friends than for the Protestants whose ritual was denied. Friends' claims to direct spiritual guidance are presumptuous indeed unless the Holy Spirit is more than a projection of man's thoughts, more than a mental object having only dependent reality. The authority for "thus saith the Lord" is the Lord; and a religion which involves such intuitions or revelations must have great faith in the source of such wisdom.

This directs us to the question about the nature of the spiritual encounter. Barclay speaks for early Friends in commending that "evangelical principle" of the universal and saving light, Jesus Christ, to whom ultimately a non-mediated response must be made if one is to be freed from his "miserable and depraved condition." We should not confuse particular emotional circumstances with the saving encounter itself. Damascus is not a sacred place, nor is noonday a specially holy time, but the ultimate encounter between Christ and man remains necessary

for salvation, as does the privilege of the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. By temperament and circumstances Fox was not given to acknowledging the part which others played as means whereby spiritual knowledge came to him. Early Friends persistently met charges that they claimed infallibility, and they had to untangle natural knowledge from special guidance. At times they forgot that their vessels were made of clay. We should not be blind to their biases, but neither should we discount their claims to genuine spiritual experiences and subsequent leadings. Despite human failings, they commend to us the Holy Spirit, who has spoken infallibly in the Scriptures and who may speak infallibly to us about the direction of our lives. In so doing they ask of us faith, not agnosticism.

Regarding the fourth issue, the relevance of the early Friends' view of holiness, I would agree with Lorton Heusel that we need clarification of the Quaker emphasis. I believe a considerable amount of re-thinking is in process among us. In bursting the utopian bubble of humanistic perfectionism, neo-orthodoxy has performed valiant service. But some rather un-Quakerly gloom remains. Legalism and irrelevancy have sometimes marked the holiness emphasis of orthodox Friends who clung to a Methodist port during the modernist storm. I am a bit puzzled by the implication in Lorton Heusel's comment that although life above sin is good Quaker theology neither ethical effort nor divine action through sanctification can bring it about. The early Quakers certainly credited divine action with bringing it about. Whether it is achieved easily may be answered readily: both Calvary and consecration are costly. I am sure that a high concept of grace will keep us from a low view of sanctification, and I think that is a point which Heusel wants us to recognize.

The holiness emphasis is a significant aspect of the Quaker awakening and we will regain our witness by getting back to the biblical truths of sanctification. It is better to purify some terms than to reject the truths which they are meant to convey. Experiential holiness as preached by the early Friends is based upon the premise that the natural man needs to be cleansed of his sin as well as forgiven for his sins—righteousness must be imparted to him as well as imputed. One difficulty today in ac-

cepting such formulas is the widespread concept of the social self. This makes it hard for people to see what Paul means when he writes, "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Maybe theology has been tyrannized by Cooley and Dewey long enough, and needs to recognize the integral self able both to be held responsible and made responsible by the destruction of self-will.

Much serious thought is taking place both among the Keswick and Wesleyan groups concerning the nature of holiness, and I trust we will take our place among them in affirming sanctification as the present portion for the believer, so that we need not fall under the indictment of Fox, "preaching up sin to the grave." The recognition that God's redemptive act is only in Jesus Christ, and that the church properly speaking is not the redemptive community but rather the witnessing community, should preserve us from the pitfalls of either legalistic or humanistic perfectionisms.

Lorton Heusel rightly alludes to the need for an emphasis upon the nature of victory beyond this present life. Our Quaker forebears reacted against failure to appropriate the lordship of Christ in this present world. False "other-worldliness" now as then breeds spiritual underprivilege and spawns moral irresponsibility. But false "this-worldliness" is both a devourer of law and an enemy of grace, especially when the self has been collectivized. True other-worldliness lets a man take the time to deny himself, to allow wrongs to await God's vengeance, to invest in long-range causes, and to live by love. Biblical eschatology prevents our preoccupation with one scheme or another and helps us to see God's grace in the midst of the world's tragedies. I am free to admit a belief that the early Quaker eschatology sowed some seeds of utopianism because of its reactionary nature. May I suggest this as a topic for further discussion?

On the final issue, the relationship of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures, of which Paul Lacey writes, we should first of all recognize that the early Friends did in fact receive scriptural teaching prior to their personal experience of Christ to whom the Bible testifies. That the *outward* knowledge of the Scriptures was not sufficient for salvation is apparent from their testi-

mony. We must distinguish between the saving knowledge of Christ, for which the Spirit has priority and which Friends emphasized, and the knowledge about Christ in redemptive history, which is contained in the inspired Scriptures. The priority of the Spirit is not so much a temporal as a personal relationship. In Proposition III Barclay demonstrates this by declaring that the Scriptures give a declaration of truth, but the application must be assured directly to the person by the Spirit who by this primary rule makes valid the secondary rule of Scripture. Thus the scriptural proposition "he that believes, shall be saved," is answered by the assurance of the Holy Spirit, "I, Robert, believe"; and the conclusion comes, "I shall be saved."

As for the theoretical sufficiency of the Spirit without the Scriptures, early Friends concurred with Paul's teaching in Romans about the natural law of the Gentiles which makes those outside the range of special revelation both responsible for their sins and capable of the answer of saving faith. Saving knowledge requires "information" which Christ as the Light gives in some measure to all men, whereas knowledge of the incarnation of Christ and the full nature of his atoning work requires the information which Scripture provides. The unity of the revelation of God in Scripture and in personal experience, which the early Friends stressed, involves both a high view of scriptural inspiration and a high view of the efficacy of Christ.

It may well be that early Friends took their fund of biblical knowledge too much for granted. The world in which they lived accepted the authority of the Bible, in principle at least. Other related factors which contributed to their failure to transmit to succeeding generations of Quakers their own effective knowledge of the Bible are: their costly stand for freedom, which prevented them from giving adequate attention to the effective training of the ministry; a Puritan "empirical bent" as Tolles terms it, which gave strong encouragement to the practical callings; and the Quietistic disdain of religious means.

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